o promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which here in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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THE FAITH OF A COUNTRYMAN

An English Farmer Speaks

By Arthur S. Rickwood, J.P.*

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ll and Its Possibilities

Permit me to apologize for being persuaded to speak to you at this impor- nt conference, which has as its theme "The Science of Relationships." But having en born in the country in the heart of Fenland, and receiving my few years, yes, y few years of education at an elementary school, which I left at the early age of even to work full time on a farm, I learned early in life to love the country and al life. From those early years I have had an unshakable faith in the soil and possibilities. The early impressions made on my mind help me to see that agricul- re is actually playing a vital part in the lives of individuals, communities, and tions. Hence my reason for attempting to say something to you about "The Faith of Countryman."

What has agriculture given to this country? I must confine myself largely our own country and its agriculture. For generations agriculture in this country s looked upon as a task for the uneducated, the simple folk, those who had no in- ination for development or progress. This impression was fixed in so many minds, t country people, and the soil with which they were connected, were increasingly glected — until the nation's food became its greatest essential in its gravest ur. It was then revealed to town and country dweller alike that agriculture had en forgotten by the millions, and its existence and importance were realized only en the possibility of starvation faced us. Only when this nation's very life was reatened did people bother about the folk in rural areas. As a consequence, in ose days thousands of acres of fertile soil and arable land went out of cultivation l became derelict. Hundreds of thousands of acres were so badly farmed that it ght as well have gone derelict. Such a depressed state of affairs existed in con- ction with agriculture that as many young people as could get out of it did so.

Mr. Arthur S. Rickwood, J.P., is a farmer in East Anglia. "The Faith of A Country- n" was the title of his address before the Conference on Rural Life at Home and Over- as, January 1947. Mr. Rickwood's statement has great relevance at a time when so ny are drifting toward the evils of materialism. "The Science of Relationships" is e title of the full report of the Conference. It is published by Rural Life at Home d Overseas, Church Mission House, 6 Salisbury Square, London, E.C. 4, England. ice 2s. Used by permission.

Their parents lost no time or effort in assisting them to get out. The reason for this was that opportunities for a decent livelihood with prospects of advancement were very remote. Thousands of our young people who should have populated the rural areas left for insecure jobs in industrial areas, and eventually became part of that great number of unemployed when unemployment was at its peak.... There was no real anxiety among the industrialists or the urban dwellers as to whether the food they consumed was produced uneconomically, or whether those who were engaged in the production of it were living and working under conditions that could be counted worthy of a so-called Christian England.

Such conditions existed between the last two world wars; hence the great slump in agriculture and the lack of interest in the countryside. In those days it was difficult even for the farmer who farmed well to make ends meet. It was certainly more difficult for those he was compelled to employ at such ridiculously low wages to live properly and to maintain an existence for themselves and their families. It was only as a result of the possibility of starvation and as a consequence of war and the submarine menace that the importance of agriculture became truly apparent to the nation as a whole. As a consequence of the dire need for food, encouragement was given to agriculture, with the result that there are today roughly six million acres more under cultivation than there were in 1939.... We are producing two-thirds of the wheat we require for daily needs, and certainly much more barley than we are allowed to use for the feeding of pigs. Hundreds of thousands of quarters are being used to make beer, and if used in the production of bacon, would soon provide better breakfasts for millions of our workpeople!

What has been the result of those years during which there has been a revival of interest in agriculture and those engaged in it? Much of the soil has been overtaxed, especially on the heavy-producing soils. Crops such as potatoes have had to be grown so frequently without the aid of organic matter, as a result of the inability to feed livestock on the farms, and the continual use of artificial fertilisers, that large acreages of the very important potato-growing areas have developed what is known as soil sickness. Man has been doping the soil, and greedily extracting from it Nature's store of fertility and changing it into cash, until the land which should be regarded by all who live on it, and by it, as a great heritage has become to some nothing other than a scope for greed. "Take all out and put as little back as you can" has been the order of the day. This state of affairs not only applies here but also in many other countries, and as a consequence the food supply of the world may become imperilled if a different attitude is not adopted.

The Earl of Portsmouth, during one of his speeches, made the following statement: "Europe has lately been cropped to the point of exhaustion, and many of her forests cut and fired. Over the whole world we knew that, even before the accelerated destruction of wartime, double the amount of timber was felled compared to growth in any one year. No doubt one underlying cause of this war, east and west, was land hunger. This does not excuse aggression, but it should put us on guard against the dangers in future. We cannot afford to have lands empty or exploited without threats in the future. We cannot hope to have a satisfied population or long-term stability unless productive resources are fully utilized and counter-erosion measures put into operation."

The following statement was made at the same time by the Rt. Hon. R. S. Hudson, M.P. (formerly Minister of Agriculture): "The more I look into the matter the more astonished and indeed frightened I am at the complacency with which people of this country regard the soil and what is happening to it. We seem to assume that somewhere and somehow we shall always be fed. It does not follow -- unless we take

me pretty drastic steps to alter the methods of husbandry of the last fifty or six- years that have resulted not only in a disastrous reduction of the area under pro- ction but also in the fertility of the soil of that area remaining in production."

Agriculture an Industry or a Service?

I am convinced that if nations came to the point where they considered that e welfare of the people as a whole must take precedence over group interests, then would move appreciably towards a better world. If those who are responsible for riculture, food, and health can continue to find ways of working more and more close- together, a sounder attitude towards the primary needs of the people will result. think many people have taken the wrong view of agriculture; they have looked upon as an industry, whereas it is a service. It is not, nor has it ever been, an in- stry. It is largely due to the error in calling it an industry that there has aris- the absurd idea that town and country conflict.... I am more and more convinced at both will eventually prosper or decline in proportion as their joint heritage is derstood and regarded.

There should be a closer contact between education and agriculture. Farm- g as a vocation should be a part of the curriculum of all technical schools. This ould help our young people to obtain a true knowledge of the land and of good hus- ndry. I believe it is essential to give our boys and girls knowledge of the great rocesses of life. To watch things grow teaches patience. Whatever else man can eed up, he cannot speed up the seasons. You cannot sow the seed today and reap the rop tomorrow.

n Is God's Assistant

In these great processes of Nature, the wonder of growth and the mysteries life -- conception, birth, development, maturity, and death -- both young and old re taught humility, that man is only God's assistant. The child as well as the adult ast always be taught that God alone is the creator of life. I am more and more con- nced that one of the world's greatest needs today is for a new moral and spiritual utlook, and I have faith to believe that in this great service of agriculture, once could be properly organized, the land could play a very effective part in reshaping new Britain and a more united world....

How humble we all become when we stop and watch life break forth from the ed. In animal life, the process is even more amazing. To inculcate more effective- into the minds of children something of these processes would reshape their outlook life so much that the generation to come would have a better understanding of how pendent man is upon man for his very existence, and how without a refined sense of d's creative presence the whole structure of life breaks down. I believe that with operation between man and man, and between man and God, the greatest fact of all can more fully realized, that man is dependent upon God and that God has made the co- eration of man's powers essential for the carrying out of His purposes in life. In riculture there is a relationship which I think stands alone. It is that which is vealed in the cycle of life, soil, seed, plant, growth, maturity, food. The closer are intelligently connected with these the more clearly we see their close associa- on with the health and happiness of man, and his link with the Divine.

How then can the rural areas of this country be developed, maintained, and reserved? We must consider the bodily welfare of those who live on and by the soil. here must be the necessary amenities of life provided, such as good housing, light- g, heating, and water, with modern fittings, and when these are provided there must

be better means of communication.... You will agree that the lives of those who li on these farms are worthy of closer contact with everyday life for the service they are rendering, and their children should have better means of travel.

A Heritage and a Goal

I believe this can be done and will be done in the course of the next few years of reconstruction.... I look forward to the day when field and farm will be regarded not only as important as the city and factory, but when the life of the so will be treated with respect. Its value will then be revealed and its gratitude fo man's husbandry will cause it to respond so that the desert will blossom as the ros When a new generation has arisen and been taught to have a living faith in Christia ideals, to value and conserve its soil, and to put service before selfishness, then not only will our land have citizens worthy of it, but it will be a land of happy a contented people. We must remember that happiness is a by-product. It is a by-pro uct of activity, not of ease. It cannot be found ready-made, nor do I think it can fashioned out of those things usually covered by the term "a higher standard of liv ing," such as material comfort, more leisure, more money, more gadgets. These are important, but can only be regarded as static things.

Happiness must not be confused with pleasure. It results only from those activities which develop personality and character.... It can be achieved through the physical exertion of work and play, through the mental exertion of acquiring knowledge, through the spiritual exertion of creative effort, through the exercise of skill, perhaps most of all through service. If we seek happiness as an end in itself, we shall not find it, but if we make service our aim, happiness is sure to follow. This is as true for a nation as for an individual. We shall never succeed in building a better, a more united, and a happier world until that is fully recog- nized, and by all. When we do recognize it, we shall discover we are on the road t building a Christian society, for happiness through service is a creative force wit unlimited power for good.

I believe that agriculture has the possibilities, if rightly handled, to bring about conditions of life throughout this country and the world which will do more to eliminate want, and conquer the fiend of fear, than any other service.

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